

M. Sailer: Possessive alternation in German idioms

- (1) (I have already put on my make-up but I still have to powder my nose.)
- ich muss noch **die** Nase pudern. (Def)
I must still the nose powder
 - ich muss noch **meine** Nase pudern. (Poss)
 - ich muss **mir** noch die Nase pudern. (DatDef)
 - ich muss **mir** noch **meine** Nase pudern. (DatPoss)
- (2) Das hat **ihnen** **das** Herz gebrochen. (DatDef)
this has them the heart broken (alternatives: Poss, DatPoss)

- 145 possessive idioms; 15 possible alternation patterns:
5 common (> 90%), 5 rare (< 10%), 5 absent
- Definite NPs can have an open possessor slot, fillable by an other argument in the sentence.
- 75% allow for a dative; 50% require it. Dative encoded **Affectee** role
- Whenever **DatPoss** is possible, so is **DatDef**
⇒ **DatPoss** is a semantically redundant marking